

For Public Release

Government of Canada
Privy Council OfficeGouvernement du Canada
Bureau du Conseil privéOttawa, Canada
K1A 0A5UNCLASSIFIEDMEMORANDUM FOR THE MINISTER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES**COUNTERING DISINFORMATION GUIDEBOOK: CRITICAL WORK
PLAN**

(For Information)

SUMMARY

- The report that you and the Clerk of the Privy Council provided to the Prime Minister on April 5, 2023, includes a commitment to implement a counter disinformation toolkit and training for parliamentarians and public servants on misinformation and disinformation, building on the United Kingdom's RESIST model.
- This note provides you with an update regarding the status of work and next steps that the Protecting Democracy Unit (PDU) is undertaking to advance the implementation of the aforementioned commitment.
- Work has progressed on the development a "Countering Disinformation Guidebook". This guidebook will assist front-line communications advisors in identifying where Government of Canada programs, policies, and services may be vulnerable to mis- and disinformation (MIDI); measuring the impact of MIDI; and determining the extent to which a government department or agency should respond.
- The guidebook is one component of a broader strategy to raise awareness about threats to democracy, including MIDI, and improving the Government of Canada's capacity to counter them.
- PCO-DI is continuing efforts to roll-out the counter disinformation guidebook in collaboration with the communications community and develop additional tools and training initiatives with the Canada School of Public Service.

Canada

For Public Release

- [APG] - UNCLASSIFIED

Background

- The PDU mandate incorporates a commitment to providing a consistent approach across the Government of Canada to counter MIDI, including training and awareness-raising initiatives targeting public servants, and to explore the feasibility of potential integration of approaches to combatting MIDI into relevant Treasury Board policies, directives, and guidelines.
- The "Countering Disinformation Guidebook" provides government organizations with the tools needed to identify where programs, policies, and services may be vulnerable to the impact of MIDI. It will incorporate mechanisms that may be used to determine whether to respond to MIDI, options to consider when responding, as well as how to evaluate the appropriate mitigation and intervention strategies.
- The guidebook builds on existing efforts and guidance presently in use across the Government of Canada's communications community, notably the Communications Security Establishment, Global Affairs Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and Indigenous Services Canada.
- The guidebook will help ensure a consistent government-wide approach to countering MIDI and will be one of the tools developed as part of our broader awareness-raising and training strategy. The strategy could include additional elements such as updates to existing Government of Canada policies and directives, public-service wide training modules and job-aids to be developed and delivered in partnership with the Canada School of Public Service.

Work Streams and Critical Path

To ensure a comprehensive, and time-efficient roll-out of the countering disinformation guidebook and other tools PCO-DI is taking a phased approach working under three streams:

Stream 1: Design and Delivery of the Guidebook

- The PDU has prepared a first draft of the guidebook, taking inspiration from the UK's RESIST 2 Toolkit as well as existing departmental-specific guidance documents within the communications community.
- The draft guidebook has been shared with a working group comprised of members from the communications community, working in the social media space with experience addressing MIDI

For Public Release

- [APG] - UNCLASSIFIED

narratives within their department or agency.

- Following input and feedback from the communications community, the PDU will provide an updated draft that will be circulated with appropriate departments. The final version will be shared with your office for formal approval.
- In collaboration with the communications community, the PDU will launch a pilot phase of the guidebook in both official languages. PDU will make any fine-tuning adjustments and work with PCO Communications to provide a final, edited, and approved version of the guidebook for formal implementation by the Communications community in September 2023.

Stream 2: Communications community roll-out and uptake of Guidebook

- The PDU will work with PCO Communications to develop a strategy for the comprehensive roll-out of the guidebook that ensures buy-in from the communications community at large, supported by senior leadership. This effort will include the delivery of a presentation to the Heads of Communications within government to familiarize them with the guidebook.
- In Fall 2023, the PDU will embark on a 'guidebook tour' of government communications shops to work directly with teams to promote use of the guidebook, and address concerns that may impede the adoption.

Stream 3: Additional tools and training

- The CSPA serves as an invaluable resource in the dissemination of the guidebook, as well as an opportunity to implement training programs to complement the guidebook.
- In anticipation of training initiatives for public servants, the PDU has connected with the Canada School of Public Service (CSPA).
- PDU will work with the CSPA to develop and deliver training at different levels. This will begin with an introductory MIDI familiarization course to provide a baseline understanding of the threat of false information to democratic institutions, as well as practical advice and guidance to enable the identification of MIDI.
- PDU would develop a MIDI-related training resources that could include modules that provide more in-depth training specific to different functions within the government, for example a curriculum targeting leaders and aspiring leaders, job aids, workshops, and arm-chair discussions to explore topical issues and research related to threats to democracy.
- In Winter 2023, the PDU will explore options around establishing a center of expertise or a MIDI-related specialist to assist

For Public Release

- [APG] - UNCLASSIFIED

departments and agencies in navigating this issue.

- PDU will explore including MIDI-related considerations into existing Treasury Board of Canada policies and directives, which could include updating the Directive on the Management of Communications.

PCO Comment

- The Countering Disinformation Guidebook is a first step toward building capacity and formalizing a consistent approach within the Government of Canada to plan for and mitigate the threat of disinformation and false narratives.
- The phased approach outlined throughout this note allows for early deliverables that are a key component of the broader, and long-term strategy to promote interdepartmental coordination and strengthen our approach to protecting Canadian democratic institutions.
- While PDU will lead on the coordination of the initiatives outlined in this note, much of the delivery depends on input and consultation from partnering units within the government, requiring buy-in from adopters. The timelines described above take this into consideration.
- The objectives of the Countering Disinformation Guidebook align directly with your mandate letter and in effect, will enhance the resiliency of our democratic institutions.

Paul MacKinnon

Attachments (0)

 Stinson/Sutherland/